

Claims:

1. A process for separating essential oils from an essential oil-containing material comprising the steps  
5 of:  
    (i) subjecting the essential oil-containing material to steam distillation using a steam distillation vessel or extraction using an extraction vessel to produce a mixture containing the essential oil and at  
10 least one hydrophilic phase;  
    (ii) contacting the mixture with a hydrophobic adsorbent in an adsorption vessel;  
    (iii) recycling the hydrophilic phase leaving the adsorption vessel to the steam distillation vessel or  
15 extraction vessel; and  
    (iv) desorbing the essential oils from the adsorbent.
2. A process according to Claim 1, wherein the mixture  
20 is obtained by steam distillation of the essential oil-containing material.
3. A process according to Claim 2, wherein the hydrophilic phase which is recycled in step (iii) has a  
25 temperature of 55-70°C.
4. A process according to Claim 1, wherein the hydrophobic adsorbent is selected from synthetic polymers, modified silica and activated carbon.  
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5. A process according to Claim 4, wherein the adsorbent

is selected from polystyrene, divinyl benzene-crosslinked polystyrene, and C4-, C8- and C18-coated silica.

6. A process according to Claim 1, wherein the essential  
5 oil- containing material is selected from Amber seed  
(=Ambrette or Musk seed), Rose, Cardamom, Cistus  
(=Rockrose), Costus root, Cumin, Elemi, Incence,  
Galbanum, Juniper, Gurjun, Lovage, Nutmeg, Orris, Myrrh,  
Cicely, Sweet Cicely, Styrax, Valerian, Melissa, Parsley,  
10 Bucchu, Cypress, Geranium, Lavandin, Lavender, Patchouli,  
Santal (=Sandalwood), Sage, Vetyver and Ylang Ylang.

7. A process according to Claim 1, wherein the essential  
oil is selected from Amber oil, Ambrette, Rose oil,  
15 Cardamom oil, Cistus oil, Costus oil, Cumin oil, Elemi  
oil, Incence oil, Galbanum oil, Juniper oil, Gurjun oil,  
Lovage oil, Nutmeg oil, Orris oil, Myrrh oil, Cicely oil,  
Sweet Cicely oil, Styrax oil, Valerian oil, Melissa oil,  
Parsley oil, Bucchu oil, Cypress oil, Geranium oil,  
20 Lavandin oil, Lavender oil, Patchouli oil, Santal oil,  
Sage oil, Vetyver oil and Ylang Ylang oil.

8. A process according to Claim 1, wherein the  
adsorption vessel is a column and wherein the desorption  
25 is effected as a chromatographic separation of the  
essential oil.

9. A process according to Claim 8, wherein the essential  
oil is Orris oil which is separated by the column into  
30 myristic acid and irone.

10. A process according to Claim 1, which is carried out continuously.